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## **The United States Southern Command: Theater Security Cooperation**

[The article below is about security cooperation within the United States Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM) theatre. It is provided courtesy of the USSOUTHCOM web site. Additional information relative to USSOUTHCOM can be found at the following URL: <http://www.southcom.mil/AppsSC/index.php>.]

The security environment in this area of focus has changed significantly during the past decade. Although border tensions have not been completely eliminated, the traditional threat of nations attacking neighbors with military force has diminished dramatically. Increasingly, asymmetric threats posed by non-state actors attempting to exploit nations' vulnerabilities have supplanted conventional force-on-force challenges.

In response to the events of September 11, 2001, the President's *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* established:

Defending our Nation against its enemies is the first and fundamental commitment of the Federal government.

The *National Defense Strategy* supports the *National Security Strategy* and identifies four Defense objectives:

Secure the United States from direct attack, secure strategic access and retain global freedom of action, invigorate existing and develop new alliances and partnerships, and establish favorable security conditions.

The *National Military Strategy*, in turn, provides focus for military activities to support the guidance from the President and Secretary of Defense:

Protect the United States, prevent conflict and surprise attack, and prevail against adversaries when called upon by the President.

The USSOUTHCOM strategy is built upon the guidance of the three preceding documents and addresses threats and challenges specific to USSOUTHCOM's area of responsibility (AOR). In keeping with the highest priority of the nation, USSOUTHCOM will ensure the forward defense of the U.S. We must protect the southern approaches to our nation with an active defense in-depth that counters, early and at a safe distance, those who seek to harm the U.S.

The forward defense of the U.S. can best be accomplished through the broad cooperation of partner nations. USSOUTHCOM must strengthen existing relationships and establish regional partnerships necessary to provide collective security across the broad spectrum of threats facing peaceful nations in the region. Coalitions and regional partnerships comprised of capable and willing nations build mutual security, deter aggression and extremism, and provide the underlying conditions for success if military action is required.

Strong regional partnerships will enable USSOUTHCOM and our partner nations to enhance hemispheric stability and security. The stability and security of the U.S. and partner nations hinge upon our ability to work together in a mutual effort to confront and defeat common security challenges. Focused regional security cooperation is key to building interoperability and other capabilities required to confront challenges before they mature into direct threats.

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## **Ensure Forward Defense of the United States**

USSOUTHCOM continues to support the War on Terrorism within our AOR and provides a forward defense against known threats transiting through or emanating from it. We seek to deter aggression and coercion while retaining the capability to act promptly in self-defense and remain cognizant that the deterrence and defeat of certain threats, particularly Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), may require preemptive action. USSOUTHCOM will remain vigilant against threats at all times. We will build regional coalitions that assure our partners and dissuade, deter, and defeat transnational threats against U.S. and partner nation interests throughout the AOR.

Transnational terrorism and organized crime constitute the primary threats to U.S. interests in the hemisphere. USSOUTHCOM identifies and counters illicit activities in our AOR that support global terrorist groups, to include efforts to manufacture, transship, or import WMD materials or delivery systems. We will put forth a cohesive and coordinated effort, in concert with partner nations, to counter: transnational terrorism and crime; illegal narcotics production; illicit trafficking (narcotics, arms, and humans); and the proliferation of WMD, their precursors, and delivery systems. Working with other agencies of the U.S. government, we will support partner nation efforts to prevent internal and transnational threats from destabilizing democratically elected governments. We will develop and implement effective integrated information sharing and provide security assistance to regional partners to promote regional security arrangements and support nations engaged in the War on Terrorism. When requested by partner nations, we will assist in the restructuring and training of defense and security forces to combat transnational threats.

Illegal aerial and maritime traffic remains a significant transnational challenge and constitutes a serious threat to the security of the U.S. and other nations in our hemisphere. USSOUTHCOM will assist partner nations to develop capabilities, within a lawful framework, that support civil authority. We support multinational cooperation to enhance each partner nation's capabilities to detect, rack, monitor, and share such tracking information. We also encourage multinational coordination of communication, asset allocation, and the interception of illegal traffic. Together, U.S. and partner nation participation in aerial and maritime hemispheric coalitions will greatly enhance our efforts to counter the security and stability threats posed by international terrorist organizations and transnational criminal groups.

Through strategic and operational planning, USSOUTHCOM will ensure effective security cooperation to confront mutual threats and challenges before they mature into a crisis, and enable the execution of military operations when the need arises. USSOUTHCOM will ensure access for peacetime operations and contingency response by developing cooperative security locations in conjunction with host partner nations. We will work collectively to improve logistics distribution and expand opportunities for multinational exercises to support the development of regional cooperation capabilities.

## **Establish Regional Partnerships**

Nations, working together in regional coalitions to address shared challenges, foster transparency, efficiency, and accountability; build a collaborative environment; and decrease tension and rivalries. USSOUTHCOM promotes this approach to create synergies and advance capabilities not normally available to countries with reduced defense budgets. We will continue to develop cooperative and productive relations with all states in the hemisphere by actively building upon existing relationships and seeking to bridge the differences in perspective that may exist. We will support the ongoing professionalization of militaries and security forces through activities that establish doctrine, develop crisis response capabilities, and support law enforcement in ways consistent with constitutional roles and responsibilities.

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Common threats in our hemisphere transcend national borders and often exceed a state's ability to unilaterally address them. USSOUTHCOM will foster cooperation and improved security relationships to dissuade regional military competition and assist in the development of partner nation interoperability throughout the hemisphere. We will also promote willingness to conduct combined training and operations with minimal U.S. support. USSOUTHCOM's *Theater Security Cooperation Strategy* focuses on building defense relationships and providing U.S. forces with peacetime and contingency access to support training and military operations. USSOUTHCOM security cooperation, in coordination with U.S. embassies, manages programs to improve partner nation military/security capabilities and ensure interoperability among partner nations and U.S. forces. USSOUTHCOM conducts numerous air, land, and sea-based multinational exercises yearly. Capitalizing upon the capabilities developed and interoperability improved through these exercises, USSOUTHCOM encourages participating nations to move from the exercise to the operational environment to form regional forces capable of responding to crises. Our joint training and exercise program focuses on areas such as counter narco-terrorism operations, peacekeeping operations, maritime and migrant operations, disaster consequence management, disaster relief, humanitarian assistance, and health services support.

### **Enhance Hemispheric Stability and Security**

There are many conditions such as poverty, inequality, and corruption that foster the threats and challenges faced in the AOR. Predominant among these conditions is endemic poverty. High rates of poverty foster regional threats such as radical regimes, criminal activities, and violence. A secure and stable environment is necessary for the sustained improvement of economic growth and prosperity required to reduce poverty in our hemisphere.

USSOUTHCOM will support partner nations' efforts to secure their territories and borders through a legitimate government authority. Legitimate government authority is necessary to provide basic security for the citizenry, uphold the rule of law, protect human rights, and consolidate democracy. Secure borders and territories are essential to deny terrorists freedom to operate in ungoverned spaces. USSOUTHCOM works with nations and regional organizations to prevent conflict while supporting stability operations and humanitarian assistance/disaster relief missions. We promote policies that provide a stable security environment, encourage development, improve living standards, and expand opportunities. Collectively these efforts help to bring about fundamental, favorable, and enduring positive changes.

USSOUTHCOM, working closely with the U.S. Department of State, continues to support democracy throughout the AOR and encourage regional militaries to support their democratically elected governments. We foster the development of greater civilian participation in defense and security policy, including executive and legislative branch oversight of defense institutions and budgets. We also assist partner nation military and security forces to clearly establish roles and missions as defined by national directives and will assist in the development of national security and military strategies.

USSOUTHCOM encourages governments to field only those military capabilities appropriate for defense requirements. We foster positive relations, promote stability, ensure safe access for all legitimate international traffic in key regions and the global commons, and protect international lines of communication. USSOUTHCOM also ensures the security and continued operation of the Panama Canal, a transit hub vital to the free flow of strategic resources for the U.S. and world economies.

### **Key Enablers**

USSOUTHCOM will ensure that we are capable of meeting our strategic objectives. To do so, we must make certain that we have an adequate level of resources to meet regional responsibilities;

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our strategic communication process synchronizes themes and messages in support of U.S. policy and hemispheric cooperation; and we continue to transform our concepts, practices, organization, training, and equipment in order to keep pace with the changing environment and challenges.

While continuing to maximize effectiveness in a fiscally-constrained environment, USSOUTHCOM will identify the resources required to execute this strategy. At the same time, we will raise awareness of the strategic importance of Latin America and the Caribbean with members of the U.S. Congress, key interagency decision and policy makers, and the American public in order to garner the support needed to achieve our strategic objectives.

Mastering the process of strategic communication will improve the potential to achieve our objectives by shaping the information environment through the linkage of our words and actions. A synchronized interagency effort of public affairs and public diplomacy will provide the transmission of integrated and coordinated themes and messages, which will be reinforced through political, economic, and military actions and activities, demonstrating the validity of what we communicate. USSOUTHCOM will incorporate strategic communication into deliberate and contingency planning, exercises, and the development of operations within the AOR.

USSOUTHCOM will achieve its strategic objectives through a continual focus on the dynamic environment of the AOR and a consistent effort aimed at transforming to operate effectively in it. Transformation involves reorganizing and improving tactics, techniques, and procedures across the spectrum of military operations, while incorporating new technology and capabilities. It also includes updating the theater architecture and reshaping our concepts and processes to better meet the challenges and threats of the future. Our transformation effort will continue the ongoing process of reviewing force and access requirements and will expand joint experimentation in our AOR.

## **Conclusion**

Through a process of partner nation and regional analysis, USSOUTHCOM identifies and responds to the challenges and threats faced by the U.S. and partner nations, considering all available resources and each nation's political, military, and cultural distinctiveness. We develop policies and strategies that address those threats and challenges, while satisfying both U.S. and partner nation goals and objectives.

USSOUTHCOM also seeks, through the Department of Defense and the U.S. government interagency, to have a strong voice in the development of U.S. national strategies and policies that improve the security environment within our AOR, dissuade regional military competition, and promote regional solutions. We strive to implement our strategies and policies in ways that are mutually beneficial to the U.S. and our partner nations.

The transnational nature of threats and opportunities will continue to draw the nations of our hemisphere together to improve security as well as commerce and communication. Trade, travel, information, and ideas now flow across borders, oceans, and geographic obstacles, bringing unprecedented benefits to previously isolated people and communities. The same connectivity that promises progress, however, enables threats to move, hide, and sustain themselves with greater ease than ever before. The coming decade will see fundamental changes in how we base and employ military forces, and how we weave military power into the diplomatic, informational, and economic facets of our interaction with our partner nations in Latin America and the Caribbean. USSOUTHCOM will be at the forefront of these changes, synchronizing our actions and programs with the other agencies of the U.S. government. We will ensure the forward defense of the U.S., establish regional partnerships, and help enhance hemispheric stability and security so that the U.S. and partner nations may extend the benefits of secure democracies and economic prosperity to all of their citizens.